



## **AAPOR Terms and Conditions for Transparency Certification**

Survey organizations, including survey subunits of larger organizations, which produce public opinion and survey research and/or commission, sponsor or report them publicly, are eligible to join AAPOR's Transparency Initiative (the "TI").

The TI entails:

- a. a certification by the organization that it complies with certain disclosure standards (the "TI Disclosure Requirements") regarding publicly released survey, qualitative, and content analysis research ("TI Research"), including the standards set forth in Section III of The Code of Professional Ethics and Practices published by AAPOR (the "AAPOR Code") as may be amended from time-to-time;
- b. an evaluation conducted by a dedicated committee of AAPOR to assess the organization's level of actual compliance with those disclosure standards;
- c. approval or denial of the certification based on that assessment; and
- d. annual follow-up assessments to assess that the organization remains in compliance with its certification.

The AAPOR Policies and Procedures for Transparency Certification are as follows:

### **A. Certification Application**

1. The applicant organization will complete and submit to AAPOR the Transparency Initiative Certification Agreement (the "Certification") signed by an individual or individuals empowered to commit the organization to the Initiative. The form of Certification can be downloaded from AAPOR's TI web page and is included as Appendix A to this document.
2. Any organization that is the subject of a current or pending AAPOR complaint or any other complaint regarding its survey standards and practices may not apply for TI certification until after that complaint has been resolved.

### **B. AAPOR Reviewer and Organization Representative**

1. The review of applications will be the responsibility of AAPOR's Transparency Initiative Coordinating Committee (the "TICC"), which will appoint two reviewers to study the details of each application and make a recommendation to the TICC, which will then

consider confirmation. Where there is disagreement among reviewers, the full TICC will examine the application.

2. The TICC will not appoint reviewers that it determines in its reasonable discretion are employed by organizations that would be considered direct competitors of the applicant organization or otherwise would have a conflict of interest with regard to the applicant organization, including, for example, a formal or informal affiliation with or recent employment by the applicant organization.
3. The TICC will provide the applicant organization with the names and affiliations of the proposed reviewers. If the applicant organization objects to any reviewer based on the same factors for which the TICC would not appoint an individual as a reviewer, the applicant organization may send a written request to the TICC explaining the objection and the TICC will appoint a substitute reviewer if the TICC determines that the objection has a reasonable basis.
4. The applicant organization will appoint a representative or representatives who will coordinate the TI certification process and general TI compliance for the organization, including working with the primary reviewers to ensure that the procedures are in place for TI certification and that the organization is in compliance with the TI Disclosure Requirements, and otherwise being the main point of communication with the reviewers, the TICC and AAPOR, as applicable.

### **C. Certification Evaluation and Approval**

1. The applicant organization will provide the TICC reviewers with documentation of compliance with the TI Requirements based on examples from two original research reports conducted by the organization (the “TI Research”) and any other documentation and information reasonably requested by the reviewers. If the TICC reviewers determine that the documentation demonstrates the organization’s compliance with the TI Disclosure Requirements, the reviewers will recommend to the TICC that the organization’s TI certification be approved. If the TICC reviewers determine that the documentation does not demonstrate the organization’s compliance with the TI Disclosure Requirements, the TICC reviewers will provide guidance to the organization’s representatives to assist them in making modifications that will bring the organization into compliance with the TI Disclosure Requirements, both for purposes of approval of the organization’s TI certification application and to support the organization’s future compliance with the TI Disclosure Requirements. Any additional guidance provided by TICC reviewers comes at no additional cost to the applicant organization and only requires resubmission of those materials initially determined not to demonstrate compliance with TI Disclosure Requirements. Note that TICC guidance is limited to procedures for providing TI-compliant documentation and does not include basic training in any aspect of survey methodology.

2. Although the TI certification evaluation entails review of past TI Research and other documentation, the Certification and compliance with the TI Disclosure Requirements under the TI applies only to TI Research released after approval of the TI certification.
3. The TICC will consider and confirm the determination by the TICC reviewers.
4. All determinations of the TICC reviewers, the TICC and AAPOR with regard to the TI, including the approval of TI certification applications, will be made in the reasonable discretion of the individual or entity making the determination. Initial reviews of applications will typically be completed within four weeks of submission but may take longer depending on the availability of reviewers.
5. The TICC will notify the applicant organization in writing of whether the organization's TI certification has been approved. If the organization's TI certification is approved, the TICC will
  - a. provide the organization with a letter signed by the AAPOR President stating that the organization's TI certification has been approved;
  - b. provide the applicant organization with the TI logo, which the organization may display on its website, printed documents, and other media, subject to a license for such use to be granted to the organization upon TI certification approval; and
  - c. add the organization's name, TI representative and website address to the list of TI certified organizations on the AAPOR website. If the organization's TI certification is approved, AAPOR may, in addition to listing the organization as a TI certified organization on the AAPOR website, use the organizations name and/or trademark solely for the purpose of advertising the TI by displaying the organization as a participant.

#### **D. Certification Maintenance, Monitoring and Enforcement**

1. To maintain TI certification, an organization must
  - a. recertify its commitment to the TI on an annual basis by signing a new Certification no later than the anniversary of the approval of its original TI certification (for which the TICC will provide an advance annual reminder to the organization's TI representative),
  - b. permit an evaluation by TICC every two years through an inspection of the transparency of a sample of recent studies conducted by the organization, and
2. If an organization chooses not to recertify to the TI, the organization must upon expiration of its then-current TI certification, cease use of the TI logo and AAPOR will delete the organization from the list of TI certified organizations on the AAPOR website.
3. The biennial evaluation of a certifying organization's ongoing compliance with the TI Disclosure Requirements will be assigned to a TI monitor by the TICC. The choice of

the TI monitor will be subject to the same conditions regarding conflict of interest as are applicable to the TI reviewers of the initial TI certification application.

4. Biennial evaluations will consist of reviewing the organization's website, two TI Research reports released since the original Certification or, if any, the prior biennial evaluation, and selected by the TI monitor to be representative of the organization's TI Research, and any other information and documentation reasonably requested by the TI monitor. The organization's representative must provide the documentation requested by the TI monitor within 10 business days of the request.
5. The TI monitor will provide a written summary of the results of the biennial evaluation and recommendation to the TICC, which will make a final determination.
6. If, as a result of the biennial evaluation, the TI monitor determines that any deficiencies in an organization's compliance with TI Certification exists, the TI monitor will contact the organization's TI representative with the results of such determination, provide recommendations for remediation, and work with the organization's TI representative to make the necessary corrections to comply with the Certification and the TI, provided, that an organization will be given 30 days to correct the deficiencies identified during the biennial evaluation, subject to the TICC providing an extension of 30 days if the TICC determines that the extension is reasonable under the circumstances. If an organization does not correct such deficiencies in the allotted time, it will be placed on suspension. Subsequent to, but in no event sooner than 12 months following the start of, such suspension, the organization may at any time provide documentation to the TI monitor to demonstrate that all deficiencies have been corrected. If the TI monitor determines that the all deficiencies have been corrected, the TICC will lift the suspension.
7. Public complaints about an organization's non-compliance with the TI will be addressed by the TICC. The TICC will use reasonable efforts to investigate and address complaints within 30 days. If the TICC determines that the complaint has merit, the organization will be evaluated in the manner described for a biennial evaluation. Organizations will be allowed to appeal any such determination of the TICC to the AAPOR Standards Committee.
8. Organizations suspended from the TI for any reason will be sent a letter notifying them that they are being removed from TI certification. During the period of any such suspension, the organization will be required to remove all references to its TI certification, including use of the TI logo, from its website, documentation and all other materials and media, and the organization will be removed from the list of organizations certifying to the TI maintained on the AAPOR website. If during the period of any TI certification suspension, an organization continues to reference its TI certification in any manner that could be construed as a claim or implication that the organization's TI certification is active, in addition to any other remedies that AAPOR might have, AAPOR shall be entitled to issue a press release stating that the organization has been removed

from TI certification. A suspended organization may not submit for TI certification reinstatement for 12 months following the date of suspension.

9. The TI certification in no way suggests or implies, and an organization may not imply otherwise, that AAPOR in any way endorses the organization or its processes, products or services.
10. AAPOR makes no representation or warranty of any kind, express, implied or statutory, relating to or arising in any way out of the TI or the TI certification. AAPOR specifically disclaims any implied warranty of merchantability, fitness for a particular purpose and non-infringement of any third party rights, and any representation, warranty, or guarantee as to the benefits, if any, to be received by an organization as a result of the TI or the TI certification.
11. In no event will AAPOR be liable to any person for any damages, including, but not limited to, indirect, consequential or incidental damages (including damages for loss of profits, revenue, data or use) arising out of the TI, including, but not limited to, an organization's TI certification, the approval, denial or suspension of any organization's TI certification, the list of TI certifying organizations maintained on the AAPOR website and any inaccuracies thereon, whether such damages are claimed in contract, tort or otherwise, and regardless of whether AAPOR has been advised, knew or should have known of the possibility of such damages. Without limiting the foregoing, in the event that any court of competent jurisdiction determines that, notwithstanding the foregoing, AAPOR has any liability to any applicant, certifying or suspended organization, then AAPOR's liability for such damages shall not exceed the amount of charges and fees actually paid to AAPOR by such organization with regard to the TI.
12. Any organization that applies for TI certification and/or certifies to the TI shall indemnify and hold harmless AAPOR and its officers, agents, employees, members and subcontractors against all damages, fines, penalties and costs incurred in connection with third-party claims arising from:
  - a. the use or misuse by such organization of the TI certification and any logos associated with it or
  - b. any breach by such organization of the terms of these AAPOR Policies and Procedures for Transparency Certification or such organization's Certification.
13. A Certification granted to an organization that is an affiliate or subsidiary of a larger organization shall apply only to the specific organization that is granted the Certification. An organization may not transfer or assign its Certification to another person or entity. In the event that a certified organization is acquired by another person or entity, including through a merger, asset purchase or equity purchase, AAPOR shall determine in its reasonable discretion the extent to which the organization's Certification shall remain in

effect for the surviving entity of such acquisition, including whether such surviving entity must reapply for Certification.



**AAPOR Transparency Certification Agreement**

## **Overview**

An organization, or subunit of a larger organization, that produces public opinion and survey research and/or commissions/sponsors them and releases them publicly or reports them privately to clients, is transparent when it discloses essential information about its methodology in any such public release of private report to clients.

The AAPOR Code of Professional Ethics and Practices (the “Code”) applies to individuals engaged in public opinion and survey research. AAPOR’s Transparency Initiative (the “TI”) extends the standards of disclosure of the Code (the “Disclosure Standards”), which are subject to amendment from time-to-time, to survey organizations. For public release or private reporting to clients of original public opinion or survey results, conformance with the Disclosure Standards entails making available in such release or report all of the methodological elements identified in the minimum disclosure requirements of the Disclosure Standards.

Organizations that certify to the TI are expected to follow practices that make all relevant items of information from the Code available to clients and to attempt to educate clients regarding the importance of transparency whenever possible (including by referring them to AAPOR’s TI information available on its web page). Organizations that certify to the TI are expected to require organizations that collect data on their behalf to follow practices that make all relevant items of information available. Further they are expected to strongly encourage clients to also make all relevant items of information available if and when they report results based on research conducted by the TI certified organization.

The items below to which the organization is certifying are the minimum reporting standards for organizations wishing to be in compliance with the Transparency Initiative. The organization is encouraged to adhere to the spirit of the Transparency Initiative by also disclosing any additional information that the organization deems relevant to the conduct and interpretation of data from each study it conducts.

### **Certification to the Transparency Initiative**

We, the undersigned, hereby certify our agreement to the following disclosure principles, policies and procedures with regard to the public release or to the private reporting to clients of original public opinion and survey results that we release or report after our certification herein to the TI (such research subject to public release or private reporting to clients, the “TI Research”):

- A. We shall provide the following disclosures with regard to TI Research involving surveys by including such disclosures in the specific TI Research or by making them otherwise publicly available, preferably on our web site, immediately upon release of the TI Research:

1. Who sponsored the TI Research and who conducted it. If different from the sponsor, the original sources of funding will also be disclosed.
2. The exact wording and presentation of questions and response options whose results are reported. This includes preceding interviewer or respondent instructions and any preceding questions that might reasonably be expected to influence responses to the reported results.
3. A definition of the population under study and its geographic location.
4. Dates of data collection.
5. A description of the sampling frame(s) and its coverage of the target population, including mention of any segment of the target population that is not covered by the design. This may include, for example, exclusion of Alaska and Hawaii in U.S. surveys; exclusion of specific provinces or rural areas in international surveys; and exclusion of non-panel members in panel surveys. If possible the estimated size of non-covered segments will be provided. If a size estimate cannot be provided, this will be explained. If no frame or list was utilized, this will be indicated.
6. The name of the sample supplier, if the sampling frame and/or the sample itself was provided by a third party.
7. The methods used to recruit the panel or participants, if the sample was drawn from a pre-recruited panel or pool of respondents.
8. A description of the sample design, giving a clear indication of the method by which the respondents were selected, recruited, intercepted or otherwise contacted or encountered, along with any eligibility requirements and/or oversampling. If quotas were used, the variables defining the quotas will be reported. If a within-household selection procedure was used, this will be described. The description of the sampling frame and sample design will include sufficient detail to determine whether the respondents were selected using probability or non-probability methods.
9. Method(s) and mode(s) used to administer the survey (e.g., CATI, CAPI, ACASI, IVR, mail survey, web survey) and the language(s) offered.
10. Sample sizes (by sampling frame if more than one was used) and a discussion of the precision of the findings. For probability samples, the estimates of sampling error will be reported, and the discussion will state whether or not the reported margins of sampling error or statistical analyses have been adjusted for the design effect due to weighting, clustering, or other factors. Disclosure requirements for non-probability samples are different because the precision of estimates from such samples is a model-based measure (rather than the average deviation from the population value over all possible samples). Reports of non-probability samples will only provide measures of precision if they are accompanied by a detailed description of how the underlying model was specified, its assumptions validated and the measure(s) calculated. To avoid confusion, it is best to avoid using the term “margin of error” or “margin of sampling error” in conjunction with non-probability samples.
11. A description of how the weights were calculated, including the variables used and the sources of weighting parameters, if weighted estimates are reported.
12. If the results reported are based on multiple samples or multiple modes, the preceding items will be disclosed for each.

13. Contact for obtaining more information about the study.

B. We shall make the following disclosures with regard to TI Research involving surveys available to the requesting party within 30 days of any request for such disclosures.

1. Procedures for managing the membership, participation, and attrition of the panel, if a pool, panel, or access panel was used.
2. Methods of interviewer training, supervision, and monitoring, if interviewers were used.
3. Details about screening procedures, including any screening for other surveys that would have made sample members ineligible for the current survey must be disclosed (e.g., in the case of online surveys if a router was used).
4. Any relevant stimuli, such as visual or sensory exhibits or show cards. In the case of surveys conducted via self-administered computer-assisted interviewing, providing the relevant screen shot(s) is optimal, though not required.
5. Details of any strategies used to help gain cooperation (e.g., advance contact, compensation or incentives, refusal conversion contacts) whether for participation in a group, panel or access panel or for participation in a particular research project.
6. Procedures undertaken to ensure data quality, if any. Where applicable, this includes re-contacts to confirm that the interview occurred and/or to verify the respondent's identity, measures taken to prevent respondents from completing the same survey more than once, and other quality control procedures (e.g., logic checks and tests for speeding and patterning). If no such efforts were undertaken, this will be disclosed.
7. Summaries of the disposition of study-specific sample records so that response rates for probability samples and participation rates for non-probability samples can be computed. If response or cooperation rates are reported, they will be computed according to AAPOR Standard Definitions. If dispositions cannot be provided, the reason(s) will be disclosed and this will be mentioned as a limitation of the study.
8. The unweighted sample size on which one or more reported subgroup estimates are based.
9. Specifications adequate for replication of indices or statistical modeling included in research reports.
10. If the results reported are based on multiple samples or multiple modes, the preceding items will be disclosed for each.

C. With regard to TI Research conducted using qualitative research methodologies involving descriptive, unstructured data, such as focus groups, in-depth interviews, case studies, narrative research, and ethnography, we shall include the following items in any qualitative research report or make them available immediately upon release of that report.

1. Who sponsored the research and who conducted it. If different from the sponsor, the original sources of funding will also be disclosed.
2. A definition of the population under study and its geographic location.

3. The instrumentation used (e.g., questionnaires, discussion guides), a description of the data collection strategies employed (e.g., focus groups, semi-structured interviews), and the language(s) used.
4. A description of any relevant stimuli, such as visual or sensory exhibits or show cards.
5. Dates of data collection.
6. The physical location of all data collection activities (e.g., subject home, office/workplace, clinic, focus group facility, street corner).
7. A description of subject eligibility (e.g., age or gender requirements) and the procedures employed to screen and recruit research subjects.
8. The number of research subjects, by data collection strategy.
9. Methods of interviewer and/or coder training, supervision, and monitoring, if interviewers or coders were used.
10. Duration of research participation (e.g., length of interviews, focus group sessions).
11. Any compensation/incentives provided to research subjects.
12. Information regarding whether or not data collection included audio or video recordings.
11. If the results reported are based on multiple samples or multiple modes, the preceding items will be disclosed for each.

D. With regard to content analyses, which include the systematic analysis of text, images or other content, which can be qualitative or quantitative and the material to be analyzed can be from any source (e.g., open-ended verbatim responses collected in surveys, newspaper and magazine articles, television and radio broadcasts, politicians' speeches, tweets, or posts on social networking sites), and which can be performed by human coders and/or via automated coding software, we shall include the following items in any content analysis report or make them available immediately upon release of that report.

1. Who sponsored the research and who conducted it. If different from the sponsor, the original sources of funding will also be disclosed.
2. A description of how the content analyzed was collected or obtained. This will include the source(s) used, how much content was analyzed (e.g., number and average length of articles, tweets or blog postings, news broadcasts), dates analyzed, language(s) included, and criteria or decision rules used to include or exclude elements of content.
3. The sampling approach used. If a census of the target population of content was used, that will be explicitly stated.
4. A discussion of any threats or concerns about the validity or quality of the content (e.g., online commentary created by bots, fabricated social media profiles, relevant content missing from the source(s) used) and any steps taken to address them.
5. A description of how the analysis was conducted. This discussion will mention whether coding was done by software or human coders (or both) and whether quantitative or qualitative methods (or both) were used. For analysis using automated coding, this discussion will mention the software and the parameters or decision rules that were used. For analysis using human coding, this discussion will mention the number of coders and any training and instructions provided to them. If a formal coding scheme was used, it will be provided. If no formal coding scheme was used, this will be disclosed.

6. Inter-coder reliability, the amount of text analyzed by multiple coders, processes for resolving inconsistencies, and any steps taken to increase the level of agreement, if multiple coders were used. If only one coder was used, this will be disclosed.
  7. The unit of analysis (e.g., a news article, broadcast, tweet, or blog posting).
  8. A description of how the weights were calculated, including the variables used, if weights were used to develop a coding scheme and/or produce final estimates.
  9. If the results reported are based on multiple samples or multiple modes, the preceding items will be disclosed for each.
  10. Other information that may need to be disclosed if the content analysis involves qualitative data collection (see Section C) or survey data collection (see Sections A & B).
- E. With regard to TI Research, If we did not collect the research data ourselves, we will obtain the disclosure information required herein from our fieldwork subcontractor so that we can make the disclosure required herein in a timely manner and if we act as a fieldwork subcontractor, we will provide the disclosure information required herein to the TI Research's primary contractor or sponsor so that such person can make the disclosure required herein in a timely manner.
- F. Reflecting the fundamental goals of transparency and replicability, we share the expectation that access to datasets and related documentation will be provided to allow for independent review and verification of research claims upon request. Our datasets may be held without release for a period of up to one year after findings are publically released to allow full opportunity for primary analysis. In order to protect the privacy of individual respondents, such datasets will be de-identified to remove variables that can reasonably be expected to identify a respondent. We acknowledge that those who commission publically disseminated research have an obligation to disclose the rationale for why eventual public release or access to the datasets is not possible, if that is the case.
- G. We have internal procedures and process to: (1) educate our staff about the TI requirements, (2) ensure that the required TI disclosure elements are made available on a routine basis for all future survey, qualitative, and content analysis research; and (3) insuring that our organization's compliance within the TI requirements is internally monitored on a regular basis. Further, we will urge our clients to provide the required TI disclosure elements and make them available on a routine basis for any survey, qualitative, and content analysis research conducted by the TI member that the client chooses to report directly.
- H. All of our employees with job responsibilities that include the methodology content of TI Research, press releases and any other forms of research data disclosure, have been properly trained in TI principles and procedures for compliance.
- I. We shall fully cooperate with (1) periodic evaluations of our TI compliance that may be conducted by AAPOR, and (2) any formal investigations of complaints that we are not in compliance with the TI requirements to which we are certifying above.

J. We shall adhere to the Code to the extent that amendments to the Code impose new Disclosure or other obligations with regard to research organizations for new TI Research.

K. We hereby agree to AAPOR's Terms and Conditions for TI Certification.

I hereby certify that I am authorized to make the foregoing certification on behalf of my organization.

Organization Name:

Name and Title:

Signature:

Date: